

12-63/c

30 December 1959

Mr. W. T. Tannehill

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Dear Mr. Tannehill:

Your recent letter to Mr. Dulles has been referred to me for reply. You raise the interesting view, as I understand it, that the rigid indoctrination Soviet citizens receive will condition them to accept the same level of economic sacrifice in the future as in the past.

No one, of course, can pretend to read the future with a high degree of accuracy. However, there are some helpful guideposts which emerge from a study of the post-Stalin trend of consumer welfare in the Soviet Union. The housing and agricultural programs are combining to raise living standards significantly for the first time since the Communist revolution. It seems clear that the Khrushchev regime is being responsive to the demands of consumers for some of the benefits of four decades of industrialization. This moderate improvement, in turn, appears to have created a climate of rising consumer expectations which is leading to modest, but real, increases in the production of durable consumers goods.

We can, then, see the beginnings of an evolutionary trend, possibly aided by increasing contact of Soviet citizens with the West. No one can predict how rapidly (or how far) the trend of the past five years can be projected with confidence. However, the view of the USSR as an unchanging monolith, able to ignore the wishes of its citizens, must now be modified.

Sincerely yours,

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12-63

Allen W. Dulles  
U. S. Central Intelligence Agency  
Washington, D. C.

Sir:

Just finished reading with interest a report in Dun's Review by Paul Wooton on your various economic appraisals of Russia. It was noted that in your opinion there would be a certain degree of dissatisfaction as more well-educated Russians became desirous of more freedom and more of the fruits of production. Further, that they (the Russians) are bound to produce men of ambition who will not be easily fooled.

These are interesting and hopeful speculations, but can there be any basis for them? I wonder if you have ever considered a somewhat analogous situation - at least as far as background development and training may be related to how well a man will, or will not, conform to his society or his authority? I am referring to the Catholic religion. I am not interested in debating the merits or demerits of the religion - that is not the point. What is - it seems to me - is the similarity in the development of the individual through a life so closely controlled and policed (if that is not too strong a word) so that conformity is so much a matter of habit at an early age that there is little chance for departures.

The Catholic religion, with its demand for segregated schooling, demand for attendance, and demand for acceptance and conformity in general, has - as I see it - been eminently successful in dulling any sense of questioning that might have existed. In Russia, if what we read is correct, the cradle-to-the-grave indoctrination of Soviet social and economic principles has more than accomplished the same result. It may be that conflicting drives which might possibly influence a Catholic are not as strong as those which might attract a Russian, but training from birth is certainly difficult to re-channel.

Perhaps it is not entirely fair to compare spiritual beliefs with economic and social beliefs, even though both might have been developed through long periods of restricted training and constantly enforced. Still, both in a sense are ideologies; and I can't quite agree that a high degree intelligence in technical fields will necessarily permeate the more ideological fields of economics and sociology. What do you think?

  
W. T. Tannehill

12/18/59

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W. T. T. STAT

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ENGINEERS  
AND  
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PERSONAL

Mr. Allen W. Dulles  
U. S. Central Intelligence Agency  
Washington, D. C.

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